BPL level

*432. SHRI MAN MOHAN SAMAL:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the percentage of people living Below Poverty Line (BPL) level in the country;

(b) would this BPL would slide down to 19.17 per cent in 2007 as reported in the 'Financial Express' dated 19th August, 2002;

(c) the States which have the lowest BPL and the highest BPL level;

(d) whether it is a fact that Orissa state is stated to have 41.07 per cent of BPL level; and

(e) if so, what action Government propose to take to bring down BPL level in the State in order to bridge the gap with other affluent states?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Based on the data from the latest large sample survey of the 55th Round on household consumer expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), 26.10 per cent of the population live below poverty line in 1999-2000.

(b) Estimates of people living below poverty line for the year 2007 is a part of the Tenth Five Year Plan, which is yet to be approved.

(c) As per the latest estimates available for the year 1999-2000, Jammu and Kashmir has the lowest percentage of people living below the poverty line (3.48%) and Orissa has the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line (47.15%).

(d) As per the latest available estimate for the year 1999-2000, 47.15% of the people live below the poverty line in Orissa.

(e) There is a three-pronged action to alleviate and reduce the poverty in the country. These are: (i) acceleration of economic growth, (ii) human, and social development through literacy, education, health, nutrition, meeting of the minimum needs, elevation of social and economic status

of the weaker sections of the society, etc. and (iii) direct attack on poverty through employment and income generating programmes and assets-building for the poor. In addition to the on-going programmes of the State Government and Central Schemes for poverty alleviation and employment generation, Special Central Assistance of Rs. 100 crore has been allocated under the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana for the Special Plan for the the KBK districts of Orissa.

Trade curbs on SAARC members

*433. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has been urged to lift trade curbs on SAARC Members;

(b) if so, whether the Executive Director of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) has pointed out that India would also benefit from the exercise, since the economic expansion would increase the demand for the Indian goods as well;

(c) whether any steps have been taken by Government in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) India had unilaterally lifted all quantitative restrictions preferentially for SAARC countries from August 1st, 1998, placing over 2000 product lines from the restricted list on to the OGL (Open General License). India also offered to conclude bilateral Free Trade Agreements with any SAARC country that wants to move faster on this front. Sri Lanka took up this offer and signal the Free Trade Agreement in March, 2000.

The South Asian Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is not part of the SAARC process and its focus is on environmental issues. We are not aware of any comments by SACEPS on SAARC Trade.

India is always ready to move ahead on Trade and economic co-operation within SAARC and continuous to play to positive role to bring this about.